

## MGS Bushfire Response

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## Melbourne Grammar's response to the bushfires *Update – July 2009*

The Melbourne Grammar School community responded quickly to support the victims of the bushfires that devastated Victoria in February 2009. More than \$30,000 has been raised through student and staff-driven fundraising activities and 10 members from our Grammar community have signed up for the Bushfire Response Care Coordinator program.

By focusing on the real and specific needs of the families affected by the bushfires, rather than just a natural desire to help, the School's recovery effort aims to transform this time of despair into one of optimism and a belief in the future.

The Bushfire Response Committee has members from all three campuses including staff, students and parents. The bushfire response strategy has two separate approaches:

- a partnership with Dixons Creek Primary School in the Yarra Valley; and
- the Care Program – support for families in the Steels Creek, Yarra Glen and Kinglake communities who have lost their homes.



*Deakin House students from left: Will Davison, James Shatin, Sam Scott, Nick Alp and Daniel Lawson with the students from Dixons Creek Primary School*

### Dixons Creek Primary School

In recent months, students from Dixons Creek Primary School have had two visits to Grimwade House. On the first visit, four Year 6 students attended the Year 6 Leadership Conference, and on the second visit the whole school visited for a day to see a performance of the Year 6 musical, *Seussical*, participate in a swimming lesson and enjoy a sausage sizzle organised by Friends of Grammar Grimwade.

Students from Deakin House in the Senior School have spent a day at Dixons Creek Primary School, reading to the students and running a sports activity program of football, basketball and skipping. Ross House students have also spent a day at the primary school running an art workshop for the students. Both Houses have donated the proceeds from their individual House Eucharist totalling \$1,500, which will be used to purchase much-needed sporting equipment and curriculum resources.



*Ross House students, from left: James Baillie, Alex Mayer, George Leighton, Cameron Venus and Tom Nichols.*

#### The Lodge

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## Care Coordinator Program

*(for families from Steels Creek, Yarra Glen and Kinglake)*

Late in Term 1, we approached the Grammar community seeking interest from people prepared to provide one-on-one support to families devastated by the bushfires. The response was quite overwhelming and the School is most grateful to those members of our community who have volunteered to assist our bushfire families. The length of commitment is quite considerable and may extend for up to two years while these families rebuild their lives.

At this stage we are supporting six families and the team of Care Coordinators includes:

<b>Julie Freeman</b>	<b>Meredith Bunn</b>
<b>Jane Lechte</b>	<b>Su-lin Loh</b>
<b>Alison Monotti</b>	<b>Jane Hosking</b>
<b>Kerry Holdsworth</b>	<b>Helen Quan</b>
<b>Madeline O'Connor</b>	<b>Karen Mitchell</b>

The role of each Care Coordinator varies depending on the needs of each family; however, the help we provide is complementary to the role of relief services as provided by Government departments, local Council and other aid agencies.

Being able to listen to the needs of each family and assist them to prioritise these needs is an essential part of the Care Coordinator role. This may range from helping families complete routine daily tasks such as ironing or providing an occasional home-cooked meal, to more complex issues such as dealing with applications for insurance claims and other compensation claims.

### How can you help?

In the latest edition of the *Grammar News* magazine, we asked members of our community to register on the School's website if they could provide goods or services to assist the families, and many members of the Grammar community responded. Now, we wish to make specific requests for various items.

These families are in need of items not covered by funding from Government benefits. Like many families who lost everything in the bushfires, they were underinsured to rebuild their homes to satisfy the new fire safety standards.

We understand that money will need to be raised to purchase many of the items; however, if a good price can be negotiated then we can meet more of the families' needs. Alternatively you may have good quality second-hand goods which you would like to donate.

***If you are able to help with any of the items listed opposite, please email us at:***

[bushfireresponse@mgs.vic.edu.au](mailto:bushfireresponse@mgs.vic.edu.au) or contact our Director of Marketing and Communications Annie Hayward on 03 9865 7680 or 0419 893 922.

## Needed Now!

**DVDs** – many children lost their DVD collections in the bushfires. If you have DVDs suitable for primary aged children, please drop them off at the Reception of Grimwade House, Wadhurst, Senior School or The Lodge and we will arrange to get them to the families.

**Mulch and soil** – some of our families have been experiencing delays in receiving approval for building applications. In the meantime, they are keen to start rebuilding their lives by preparing the soil for planting. If we have any members of the Grammar community with links to a Nursery, we would like to hear from you.

**Plants and fruit trees** – one of our families is keen to replant their garden in preparation for the time when they will rebuild their home. This family has asked for help with citrus and stone fruit trees.

**Garden tools** – planning and planting a garden is one of the first activities many of the families are involved in at the moment. Garden tools such as a fork, spade, rake, trowel and hoe are just some of the tools in demand. You may have some garden tools which you no longer need but are still in good working order. If so, we would like to hear from you.

**Sheds** – nearly all our families have a need for a shed to store goods. They have been overwhelmed with donations of clothing and homewares; however, they have no place to store them in their temporary accommodation. If you have a contact in the shed industry, we would really like to hear from you.

**Queen-sized bed and mattress** – one of our families is living in an artist's studio and while comfortable, is keen to purchase a queen-sized bed and mattress. You may know where these items can be purchased for a good price. If you have any contacts in the bedding business, we would really appreciate hearing from you.

**Window blinds** – one of our families has moved back on to their property and is living in a fitted out shed while they rebuild their home, avoiding the payment of rent during this long process. Heating is an issue and window blinds will go a long way to keeping in the heat. If there is anyone in our community with a contact for window blinds, please contact us.

**Home furniture** – all of our families are currently assessing the cost of rebuilding their homes. Lounge, dining and bedroom furniture are essential items and we are seeking assistance from anyone in the furniture industry who may be able to supply items at a reasonable price.

**Transport** – some of the items we are requesting are too big to transport in the boot of a car. If members of the Grammar community have contacts in the transport industry, we would really appreciate this information.



*Work commences, from left: Tom Monotti, Nick Voyage, Tom Clark, Eric Lemoussu and Julie Freeman*

## **School Holidays Working Bee**

During the school holidays a group of past and present MGS students joined staff member Annie Hayward and Care Coordinators Julie Freeman and Alison Monotti on a working bee to clean up a bushfire-affected garden in the Yarra Valley. Dorothy Barber lost her home in the fires and has been staying with local sculptor Ernst Fries. Ernst has a gallery which is attached to his home on the Yarra Glen-Healesville Road. Dorothy is planning a photographic exhibition of the Black Saturday bushfires in a couple of months and requested help to clean up the burnt garden in preparation for the exhibition. We were extremely fortunate to have the assistance of qualified gardener, Eric Lemoussu. Eric is an expert in landscaping and dripper systems and he volunteered his services on the day. For five hours Eric directed a hard-working group of boys, including James Freeman (OM 2008), Tom Monotti (OM 2008), Richard Kelly (OM 2008), Nick Voyage (Year 12), Matthew Jarman (Year 11) and Tom Clark (Year 11).

On completion of cleaning up the garden, Dorothy took us to her property just off the Steels Creek Road so we could see first-hand the extensive damage caused by the bushfires.



*Current students, from left: Nick Voyage, Matthew Jarman and Tom Clark enjoy a well-earned break*



*Dorothy Barber points to what remains of her home in Steels Creek and the burnt valley beyond*

## **MGS Bushfire Response Committee**

Chair of the MGS Bushfire Response Committee – Polly Flanagan  
Care Coordinator Counsellor – Elaine Hosie  
Care Coordinator Manager – Annie Hayward  
MGS Bushfire Response Secretary – Michael Joyce

## **Care Team – Senior School**

Peter Dick – Care Project Leader (CPL)  
Ian Riddell  
Geoff Guggenheimer  
James Daniell – Year 12  
Nick Voyage – Year 12  
Matthew Jarman – Year 11  
Louis Wardle – Year 11

## **Care Team – Wadhurst**

Eleanor O'Donnell – CPL  
Claire Montpetit – Deputy CPL  
Year 7 and 8 students

## **Care Team – Grimwade House**

Simon Cowell – CPL  
Cathie Ireland – Deputy CPL  
Di O'Sullivan – President, Friends of Grammar Grimwade  
Year 6 students



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